



ORTHOLOPHA

The Newsletter of the Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe

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Hi Everyone,

Sorry about the glitch last month, The Rare Plant Sale has been moved to a two-day affair in early November. This month, Sunday 29 September, we go to see some work that the Society has been doing at Mukuvisi Woodlands as a regular meeting. Manfred Spindler will talk on Pachypodiums.

The picture above shows a Xerophyte growing on the rocky slopes of Mt Mulanje in Malawi. Somehow they are a little like Zimbabweans, they thrive in the most hostile of conditions and often look after other plants in the safety of their arms and chests!

Cheers, Mafungi.

Your Committee

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Monthly Meeting Sunday September 29th 2019

This month's meeting is at Mukuvisi Woodlands when entering the gate turn left and go straight down to the gate where the horses are kept. Go through the gate and follow the road until you see where the meeting is set up. Meeting is at 10.00 for a 10.30am start. Bring a plate of snacks to share, a hat for bald pates, your chair and a prize for the raffle. Some member might like to stay on after the meeting and have a light lunch and a couple of drinks in the woodland. Definitely bring a chair!

Interesting Plant: September

What is this, on the right?

Send your knowledgeable and considered opinions to bo.hoom52@yahoo.com.

The respected judge's decision is final and the winner will get a box of choice Belgian chocolates, provided they are shared.

This plant was photographed on a firebreak on the plateau of Mt Mulanje in Malawi at an altitude of around 2 000masl



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

Send your entries to Mafungi at
bo.hoom52@yahoo.com

The plant above is the September entry. What is it? A clue, no-one on the Flora of Tropical Africa Facebook site could identify it, so good luck!

Photograph taken by Mafungi



The picture left has nothing to do with plants but is a general alert to all humans and their potentially negative impact on the environment. Mt Mulanje is relatively clean of human waste, there are no roads on top, only paths and firebreaks. The latter are used by serval cats as they hunt at night and evidence of serval is very common and seen by their scat. On the left we see that a cat has swallowed some blue plastic, which luckily has passed right through its alimentary canal and hopefully left the animal unscathed. However on

this huge mountain, a small serval predator population and still some visible effect from man's waste in the animal scat. Imagine if roads passed on and over this mountain and if it were populated by large numbers of villagers or uncaring tourists, the impact of such detritus could be huge. As it is there is very little mammal life on this mountain massif and we only saw one klipspringer, several rock hyraxes and a few baboons in seven days of hiking.

Take your waste away from wild areas. Leave only footprints!

Annual Membership: Are due in January each year. Those of you who haven't paid yet, it is time to reform and be good!!!! Remember for your \$20 per year, you get a monthly Newsletter, free issues of Ingens as they are printed and you get invited to at least 11 choice venues each year. Big-time Bargain Bonanza! This year there will also be the Grand Rare Plant Exhibition in October.

Membership is \$20 per person/couple per year. Children \$5 per year. Foreign membership US\$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member, **CABS Platinum: Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society**

Acc #: 1002616336 Reference: kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference or through EcoCash: 0774 257 791 (Doreen Richards) Note this is a new number.

The Mulanje Massif

We were extremely lucky to go recently on an organised and well-guided hike around the Mulanje massif in southern Malawi. This was an all-Africa meet of the Mountain Clubs of Africa, but as it turned out there were only representatives of Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

I was very keen to go especially after seeing Brian Terry's broad orange swathe of *Aloe chabaudii* var *mulanjiensis* which we showed you last month. However it was not to be and aloes were few and far between on this huge mountain fortress. We only found a few isolated colonies of *Aloe arborescens*. And yet the habitat is ideal for aloes, large expanses of granite with jumbled boulders where the mountains have come crashing down. Miombo woodland on the way up and sheltered areas where fire and frost do not reach. The other plant life was very similar to what we would see on the grassy areas of Mt Nyangani or the Chimanimani. *Xerophyta* grows to gargantuan proportions on Mulanje and there is no doubt that this plant is well adapted and thriving. It can definitely be a tree on this mountain and the branches and forks often provide shelter to multiple species of plants. The mountain on its eastern slopes can receive up to 3 000mm of rainfall each year so it is a bit wet for most aloes. I must admit when I first saw some in this habitat, I thought they looked just like *Aloe munchii* which occurs only in the Chimanimani. The initial specimens we saw were single-stemmed, tall plants growing on their own whereas *A. arborescens* tends to grow as a tall, multi-branched hedge-row. Genetic studies in due course will undoubtedly confirm whether Mulanje has its own sub-species.





I must admit I am fascinated by Nature's gardens that we see on the granite mountains in particular of southern Africa. Mulanje was no exception and on this page I give you some snippets of the amazing colours and plant life that take root where nature has scoured out small basins in the very solid granite. If only we could wield a giant diamond-studded chainsaw and bring these gems back home to include in our landscaped features in the gardens.

Or better yet to take them to Chelsea and recreate a little bit of the real Africa for the most famous Flower Show of them all!

On the right we see a little arrangement of hand-basins fashioned entirely by nature with provision for not only a large bowl for the face and hand wash, but two little basins adjoining for the soap and the razor a shaving foam. Lichen and sedges provide subtly textured decorations.

No doubt in ages past men and women of honour have paused at just such sites and relished the joy of removing unwanted body hair from grubby faces, under-arms and even from elegant legs with probably the odd Brazilian thrown in for good measure.



And so we come to these final two pictures, left and below. Absolute gems of little micro-meadows exhibiting a range of crassulas, lichens, sedges and the like. In summer I bet there will be ferns as well. And on Mulanje almost everywhere you look you will find *Xerophyta*, tough, resilient, adaptable, clearly fire- and frost-resistant and looking just right in habitat.



Healthy Habits 4.

By Lizzie Small

Hello folks, summer is here, warm sunny days and cool nights but the temperature otherwise is great. This month I am summarising important minerals in our health and food.

Every living cell needs minerals to function efficiently. They are involved in energy production, growth, healing and in the utilization of other nutrients. Minerals occur naturally from rocks eventually ending up in the soil and thence into plants and animals. There are two categories, macro- and micro-, indicating the amounts we require. In this article we will look at the common minerals, their uses and the foods which contain them. In the macro- category are calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium. While in the micro category we are just going to touch on iron and zinc.

Calcium is vital for strong bones and teeth, muscle functioning and nerve impulses. Deficiency can cause rickets in children and osteoporosis in adults. Also muscles are affected and as the heart is a muscle the cardiovascular system is affected too. In our food the main sources are dairy products, seafood and green leafy vegetables. There are many calcium supplements but exercise caution as often tablets give less absorbable calcium than is on the label. Check that the product contains vitamin D as this helps absorption. Split the dose and take half morning /half at night, it is better absorbed and helps us sleep. Of course the best intake is from food, but if you are intolerant to or don't like dairy products then a supplement may be in order. Finally exercise helps our bodies to lay down calcium for stronger bones.

Magnesium is involved in energy production, it assists in the uptake of other minerals and is vital in nerve functioning. It is found in most foods especially dairy products, fish and meat. Having too little magnesium can cause cardiac problems, and disorders of the nervous system like depression and irritability.

Sodium is very important for maintaining water balance and blood pH. Although deficiency is rare it can happen but usually when taking diuretics on a low salt diet. It can result in many symptoms too difficult to discuss here. Excess sodium can result in high blood pressure, oedema and kidney problems. Virtually all foods contain some sodium, the commonest being salt and flavourings in snacks. As always eat natural foods when possible. Sodium's partner in our bodies is

Potassium, they work together to control water balance. It is important in maintaining stable blood pressure and in transmitting electrochemical impulses. A deficiency has wide ranging effects but is relatively rare except when connected to medication. It is found in dairy foods, fish, meats, fruit, (especially bananas), vegetables and whole grains.

Iron's main function is to produce healthy red blood cells which carry oxygen and food round the body. Anemia iron deficiency results in fatigue, pallor and slow mental reactions. It is possible to have excess iron in the system which can be stored and accumulate in tissues causing multiple problems. Good sources of iron are eggs, meats, green leafy vegetables and wholegrains. Taking Vitamin C at the same time as iron helps it to be absorbed for example a drink of orange juice at breakfast followed by an egg and a slice of whole-wheat bread.

The final mineral we will touch on is **Zinc**. This mineral is important in reproductive health, promotes a healthy immune system and aids in wound healing. When too little zinc is present in the body the sense of taste and smell are diminished, skin problems eg acne, nail weakness and slow healing can occur. Zinc is again widespread in food but is found especially in animal products eg egg yolks and meats. Caution – do not take more than 100 milligrams of zinc in a day as it can be toxic.

In Africa the soils are often zinc-deficient and consequently so are the crop leaves and grains and the animal products derived from the crops.

As always the above nutrients are best absorbed from our food not in tablet form. If you are taking more than one supplement just check on the total amount of the minerals, you may have too much.

Now that we have covered the basics let's put all this knowledge into food and work out the elusive 'balanced diet'. Have a great month and the enjoy the warmer weather.



There are consequences to everything that people do in life. A legal battle between a couple of avaricious businessmen who come from the Mulanje District and a court injunction banning the legislated custodians of the Mountain, the Forestry Commission from exercising their powers have seen the famous Mulanje cedar (*Widdringtonia whytei*) all but decimated on the mountain. Plant poachers are seen and heard frequently and act almost with impunity. Rough hewn planks are carted off the mountain and heaps of aromatically scented wood chips are all that remain of once-proud trees.

The cedar exists now as only a few disjointed trees and the one pictured right was right at the steps of one of the mountain huts. It had been twin-stemmed and the larger stem had been cut down and carted off as illicit loot. Of course there are people who care in the country and steps are afoot to get the mountain massif under the joint jurisdiction of the Commission and a trust set up especially for the purpose. Huge International support from forestry expertise and funding will then become available to re-afforest the mountain and hopefully stem the tide of illegal harvesting.



You never know where your little pot of gold will come from in this world of ours. I know if this beautiful stream and its associated sandbank were anywhere near my house and garden, I would use the river-deposited grit as the bulk for my pot-plants and even in ground-hole plantings. I have never seen such good, gritty sandy substrate. Perfect for drainage and to provide bulk! Let's hope the Plant Poachers of Mulanje don't find it.

Enjoy your week and we'll meet on Sunday at Mukuvisi!
Cheers Mafungi